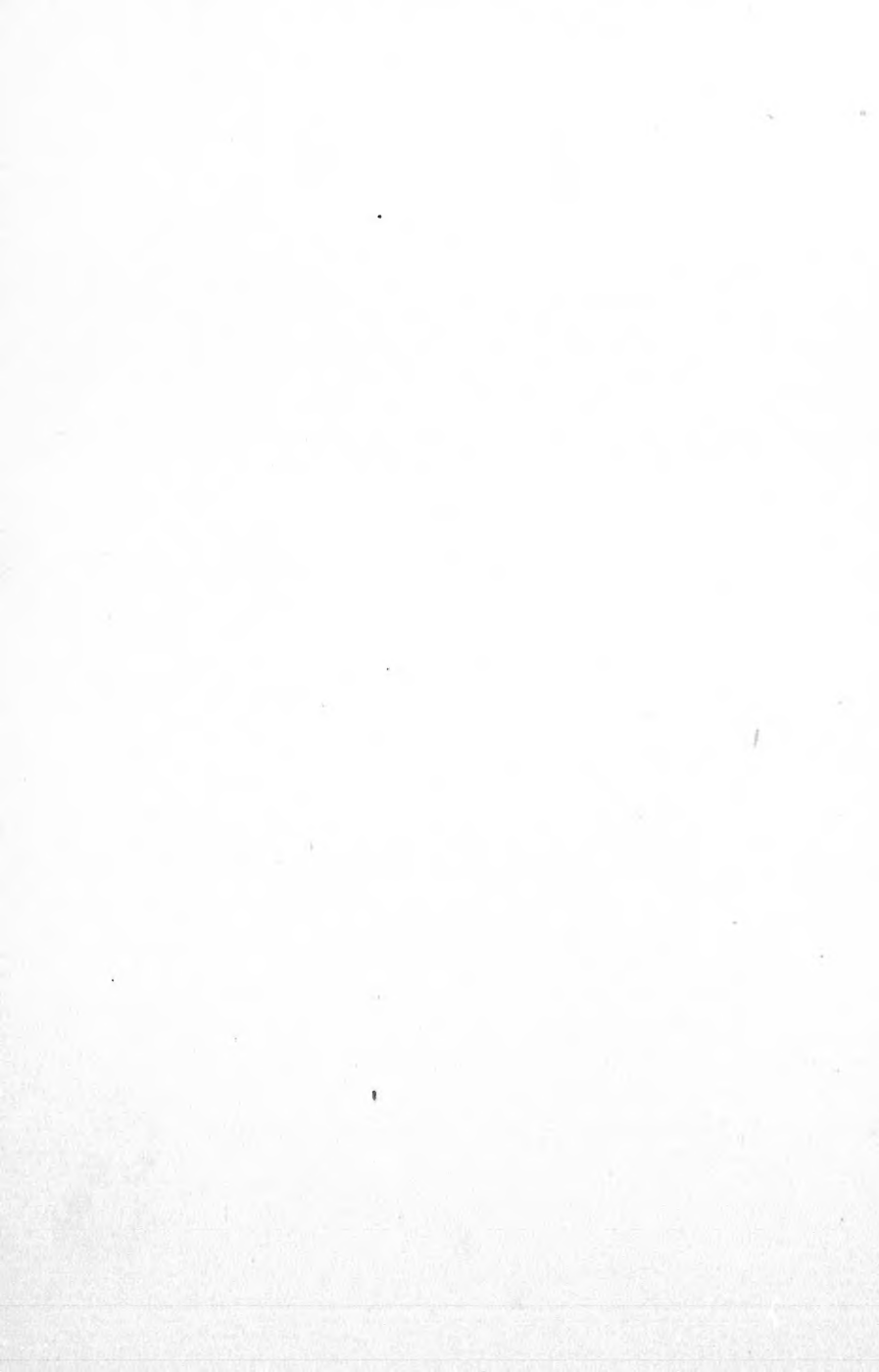




A Drama of Two Lives

And Other Poems





*Miss Margaret Bell : Ottawa,
with the author's kind regards. T*

A Drama of Two Lives

The Snake-Witch

A Canadian Summer-Night

And Other Poems

BY

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
A DRAMA OF TWO LIVES	I
THE SNAKE-WITCH	23
A CANADIAN SUMMER-NIGHT	65
THE FIR-TREE	75
AMPHIOXUS AND ASCIDIAN	81
ADDITIONAL VERSES :	
THE SONG AND ITS SINGER	91
A MEMORY	92
ON THE ATLANTIC	93
A DREAM'S ENDING	94
LAKE-SCENES IN CANADA	96



A DRAMA OF TWO LIVES



THIS poem, under the title of "**EAST AND WEST**," was privately printed at Toronto, Canada, a few years ago. Subsequently, at the request of the Editor of the "**Canadian Magazine**," it appeared in that publication; and in the following year it was reprinted without the author's previous knowledge in a paper published in the **UNITED STATES**, and also in the Toronto "**Daily Empire**." The changed title in the present issue is due to the original title having been appropriated by writers to whom the poem was no doubt unknown.

The scene of the **First Part** of the Poem lies among the mountains of **Western America**; and that of the **Second Part** in **Southern England**. A year is supposed to have elapsed between the events recorded in **Part I.** and those of **Part II.**

A DRAMA OF TWO LIVES.

"We look before and after,
And pine for what is not."

THE PROLOGUE.

ART thou the old dream dreaming?
Poor heart, of the morrow beware—
Death may lurk in the brown eyes' veil'd gleaming,
In the white throat so wondrously fair.
The tones that wild heart-throbs awaken—
The sheen of the gold-shower'd hair—
The touch that thy soul hath so shaken—
May lure thee, and leave thee—ah, where?

Trust it not, the wild, treacherous gladness—
The twin hounds of Passion and Pain
Are swift to arise—in their madness
They rend, and they rest not again!
The day-dream is sweet in the dreaming,
But dreamless the night's dull despair,
When the voice, and the touch, and the gleaming,
Have lured thee, and left thee—ah, where?

I.

THE sultry day is well-nigh done,
Aflame is all the fiery west—
The giant snow-peaks, one by one,
Are crimson'd by the great red sun
Whose glory gilds each gleaming crest.
And far—upon the golden sky,
A black fleck floating silently—
A solitary eagle sweeps
Its way across those trackless deeps :
As trackless as a frozen sea
Whose waves have never stir nor sound
In all its weird immensity.
Below, the foot-hills stretch around
Mile after mile—untrack'd, untraced,
A desolate and dreary waste
Of shattered rock and clinging pine,
Deep-cleft by many a jagged line
Of lonely gulch and cavern hoar,
Where night is in the noon of day—
And months and years go on alway—

And still, as in the days that were,
Those western hills are wild and bare,
The eagle's home, the lean wolf's lair—
Unchanged, and changeless evermore !

But deep within—the rocky core
Of those lone mountains, rent and old,
Is seam'd and vein'd with glittering ore,
And lurid with the gleam of gold.
So, to those savage wilds have come
A few wrecked souls, as savage. Some
By the fierce gold-thirst thither led,
And some from human vengeance fled,
And some world-chased by bitter wrong—
Rough, reckless, bearded, bold and strong,
They come from far-off lands and climes,
But little speak of earlier times,
Each living as it seems him best,
Alone, and heedless of the rest.

The daylight softly ebbs away,
Though lingering still with tender ray,
And still the sunset's waning glow
Climbs slowly up those wastes of snow :
But here and there faint stars are seen
In the blue gaps that lie between
The glimmering peaks, and all below

Is grey with creeping mist. The stroke
Of restless pick, whose rhythmic clang
All day among the mountains rang,
And many a wild, weird echo woke,
Is silent now ; but yet no sound
Or stir of life is there reveal'd
Among the scatter'd huts around.
To-night they linger long a-field,
Those toilers in the stony womb
Of the old Earth : but through the gloom
Dark forms, slow growing, now appear :
And two among them gently bear
A human burden—ghastly, wan,
And black with powder—one in whom
The likeness of a living man
Is well-nigh all crush'd out. And they,
Those hard, rough miners—tender now
As very women—softly lay,
With silent footsteps, sad and slow,
Their comrade in his lowly hut,
Where gaunt and grey the rocks out-jut
Across the jagged rift below.

He wakes again to life at last,
But not to consciousness or pain—
The throb of agony has pass'd
Though life doth still awhile remain.

A Drama of Two Lives.

And they who stand beside him there,
And bathe with rough but pitying care
His blood-stain'd breast and fever'd brow,
He knows them not—his spirit now
Is far away from that lone spot
In scenes long-left, but unforgot—
A stately terraced walk he sees,
Pale-tinted by the crescent moon :
The odour of the summer breeze,
The whisper of the swaying trees,
Fall softly on his soul—and soon
A clinging form is by his side—
Their lips are one—the whole world wide
Has not so fair a form for him—
His heart beats fast, his senses swim
Under her whisper'd words. Alas !
That such should be, and come, and pass,
Even as the wind that stayeth not.

Well may the listeners shrink—God wot !
A laugh from dying lips to hear :
In sooth, it hath a ghastly sound
That well may cause a throb of fear
In hearts as bold as those around—
And bitterly, though faint and low,
From those pale lips the accents flow :

I told thee, when thy fantasy
Had sicken'd and had ceas'd to be—
When thou, unmoved, my name couldst hear,
Or hear it with a shrinking fear—
When hand met hand, and no quick thrill
Came, as of old, thy heart to fill—
And that one memory had become
A blear'd ghost, wan and wearisome—
Thou hadst but one brief word to say,
Or look—and I no more would blot
The brightness of thy life's young day,
But drop from out that life away,
And be as thou hadst known me not.

I told thee, when the thing was said,
I would go down without a cry—
A bubble—and the wave goes by,
And all the past is blurr'd and dead.
Why should I curse thee? All around
The dead leaves drop. The wintry ground
Is bare and black, that once was green—
The song-birds of the summer's sheen
Where bleak winds blow no more abide—
All life's poor glammers wax and wane—
Then how shouldst thou unchanged remain,
In all this change of time and tide!

The damp of death is on his brow,
The flame but feebly flickers now—
A struggle for the strangled breath,
A gasp that faint and fainter grows :
And then the long, deep, calm repose,
The one long hush of death !
They draw the hood across his face,
And leave him to his Maker's grace !

II.

BLITHE, and bright, and debonair,
Is Deercliffe Court this afternoon—
The roses in their flush of June
On terrace, lawn, and gay parterre,
In glowing masses fill the air
With summer fragrance. All around
Fair forms are floating, and the sound
Of light patrician laughter blends
With faint-heard strains of melody—
And friends are gaily greeting friends—
And warm and bright the summer sky
Its cloudless azure dome extends
O'er all that courtly company.

Within the vast ancestral rooms,
The noble hosts of Deercliffe stand
With winning smile and ready hand
To greet their throng of guests. Rich glooms
Upon the blazon'd arras throw
On Parian groups their purple glow :

And bowers of tropic plants, between,
Roll back the sunlight's rippling sheen :
And high above, in long array,
Steel-coated warriors grim and grey,
And ermin'd judges, stern and cold,
And plumèd gallants, gay and bold,
Who many a roaring catch had troll'd
In those old halls, in days that were ;
And maidens in their bloom of May,
With their red lips and pearl-deck'd hair
And poor dead smiles, long pass'd away,
Look down upon as bright a scene
As in those halls had ever been.

She stands beside a marble fawn,
Gold-crown'd above her low pale brow
With sun-flush'd tresses, and a glow
On lips and cheek of pearly dawn.
Lithe as a tawny lioness,
Her form ha still, in its slim grace,
A girl's young beauty. One may trace
In all its swaying loveliness
The natural pose and pride of race
Subdued by inborn tenderness.
Her picture : you may see it there—
It hangs upon the southern wall
Among the rest, more fair than all,

With its great waves of tawny hair,
And tender mouth, and gold-brown eyes
Wherein a wistful yearning lies.

Beside her stands the noble Earl,
In act and instinct, to the core,
True to his rank, if nothing more :
All coldly courteous. In the whirl
Of public life, no passing blame
Had ever touched his ancient name.
Noblesse oblige, his motto ever :
And so he held without endeavour
The world's respect, his peers' esteem,
His young wife's love—well, so 'twas said—
But love, the passion and the dream,
Scarce troubles now a young girl's head.
What, if without our world it lies—
Shall hearts for that be void and sore ?
Rank, wealth, world-homage won—what more
Is wanted for a paradise ?

Gay goes that garden festival !
Around, the glorious roses glow ;
Their fanfares gay the bugles blow ;
The tennis-lawns and pathways all
Are bright with beauty and the gleam
Of radiant gems and silk and lace,

And many a memory-haunting face.
Within the rooms, in dazzling stream
(Fit pageant for a painter's dream)
The guests move onward. Some have pass'd
With their young hostess, free at last,
Through all the glittering living maze,
Within the noble gallery,
Where paintings of the old art-days—
Of Rubens, Titian, Veronese—
Rank upon rank, unbrokenly,
Enshrined in deathless glory, shone—
With many of our modern day,
Fit co-mates—so the world will say,
When Time's slow touch shall o'er them stray,
And mellowing years have come and gone.

A passing group has paus'd before
A strange weird painting—done by whom
None knew—its legend only bore
The picture's name : "a lonely tomb."
So fraught the scene with sense of pain,
That many a passer turns away :
But those who stop, perforce must stay,
And look, and lingering, look again.
A sunken cross—the sea—the shore—
A levelled sand-heap—nothing more
To tell the lonely sleeper's tale—

A grave beside a storm-blown sea,
And on the land, nor leaf, nor tree,
And on the sea no gleam of sail
Or glint of wild bird's restless wing,
Or sight or sign of living thing—
A scene that doth the soul oppress
With its wide utter loneliness.

Between the lines the tale is read,
A voice amidst the silence said—
Certes ! the scene is weird and drear :
But in the Western wilds, last year,
I came across a scene as dread,
A grave as silent, lost and lone—
The cloven ice-cliffs overhead,
And shatter'd rocks around it thrown !
In truth, a strange titanic tomb
Whose walls were never built or plann'd
By human skill or human hand—
But in that silence wide and dread
Those walls will hold their lonely dead
Close hugg'd till comes the crack of doom !

They turn'd—and in the speaker knew
A soldier and a traveller too :
A paladin of high renown
In all the most exclusive sets :

One met to-day in ducal halls,
At midnight crushes, masques and balls,
Then heard of in some far-off town
Among the Moslem minarets—
Or where the Calmuck deserts lie
In their untamed immensity—
Or pillar'd date-palms stately stand,
Green islands in a sea of sand,
Within the Nubian's burning land—
Or where the wide Marañon flows,
And forest upon forest grows,
And Cotopaxi's gleaming snows
Are white against the Western sky !

All gather'd round, and eagerly
The Colonel question'd—what, and where
Was that strange tomb of which he said :
And who was he, the lonely dead,
Who slept his last long slumber there ?

And so his tale the traveller told :
Last year, he said, when Western woods
Were flush'd with autumn's red and gold,
I cross'd the rocky solitudes
Among the cloud-girt mountain chains
That rise from Arizona's plains,
By sombre gorges deeply cleft,

Where Time's denuding hand has left
Stern record of his patient toil,
And hurrying streams in wild turmoil
Leap darkling to the distant sea.
And there, in those far wilds, did we—
I, and my silent Indian guide
And our brave mules—climb patiently,
Until one sultry eventide,
Slow toiling up the mountain side,
Across a miners' camp we came :
The topmost peaks were still aflame
With the red sunset's dying glow,
But all was grey and dark below.

And in the camp there was no sound
Or stir of life ; but all appear'd
Lone and deserted, till we near'd
A distant hut in which we found
The miners gathered, mute, around
A dying comrade. As I gazed
Upon the dying face, its eyes
Turn'd upon mine with sad surprise
In their last lingering look. Amazed,
I stood, till memory found the clue,
And then the poor dead face I knew—
Poor Geoffrey ! everybody's friend !
Who thought that such would be his end ?

Countess ! I think you knew him, too :
Young Geoffrey Vernon ! Was it not
At Deercliffe—at this very spot,
I met him once, two years ago ?
With sudden effort she suppress'd
The wild fierce throb that tore her breast,
And turn'd, and slowly answer'd—No !
I do not think it !—all the same,
I do remember, now, the name—
I pray you, let us hear the rest.

Her voice was hard, and strange its tone
As voice of one that would subdue
A moan's low cry. A livid hue
Came o'er her cheek, and then, anew,
As quickly as it came, was gone—
Unseen, unheeded. And again,
With voice that held no touch of pain,
She said, I pray you, then, say on !

Well, there is little more to say—
I kept the death-watch till the day
Came greyly, and the stars were gone.
Then follow'd the strange burial :
The strangest that has ever been
Before or since, or ever shall
In all the coming years be seen.

The hills above the camp, that night,
Threw back a lurid spectral light :
And suddenly among them shone
A solfatara's fiery cone,
Between the fissured rifts upthrown.
And with the dawn a seething flood
Of pitch-like, black, and trailing mud
Pour'd from its throat, and forced its way
Far down the narrow gorge that lay
Darkly beneath it. There they placed
(Within a few rough boards encased)
The body of the silent dead.
And one they call'd "the preacher" there,
Uncover'd, and with low voice said
A few scant words of hurried prayer.
Then came the wave: a moving wall,
It crept around the coffin-lid,
And rose and rose—and all was hid
Beneath its black and massive pall
That froze to solid rock anon !
And ever as the years roll on
The secret of that silent stone
Lock'd darkly in its hidden core—
The goad that drove its tenant forth
From home and kin, o'er sea and earth,
To perish there—remains unknown,
And so remaineth evermore !

* * * * *

It seem'd as though the cruel day
Would never end—and all the while
To force upon the face a smile,
And this and that, O God! to say
Whilst all the thought was far away—
And all the glitter and the gleam,
The greeting forms that came and went,
Seem'd but the glamour of a dream
That work'd to her bewilderment.
But now at last the day has pass'd,
The lingering, gleaming, ghastly day—
The carriages have roll'd away—
And she is free—at last—at last!

* * * * *

She stands alone within her room—
The night has come: the moon, on high,
Sails softly through the summer sky—
The floor is flecked with light and gloom—
The glory of her loosen'd hair
Is all about her—white and bare
Her shoulders and her white feet shew
Like marble in the pale moon-glow.
And light as one that moves in dream
She seeks the costly cabinet
Wherein her rarest jewels gleam,
And stooping, wildly takes from it
A few poor letters—three or four,

She had not dared to treasure more—
And these, why keep them now, she said :
To keep them were a bitter jest
On this great lie of life, at best,
And here they do but mock the dead !

No need has she to scan again
Those words of passionate power and pain,
That branded were in heart and brain.
One lingering, clinging kiss—the last—
And through their leaves the swift flame pass'd,
And the grey ashes, one by one,
Dropt silently, and all was done.
But as the last gleam o'er them swept,
Through all her soul a terror crept
And shook with sobs her shuddering breast—
Her hands across her eyes she press'd,
But that dead face she needs must see—
And all the yearning Past is there—
And low she moans, in her despair,
O Jeff! poor Jeff!—it *had* to be !



THE SNAKE-WITCH
A SEQUEL TO A TALE HALF-TOLD



THE earlier portions of this poem—comprising the first four or five printed pages, and a dozen lines or so in its after part—were composed several years ago in Western Canada; and the poem was then laid aside, under the stress of work in connection with the writer's duties in the University of Toronto. But latterly, in his days of idleness, a strong desire has come upon him to complete the fragment of the poem thus begun. For reasons, however, which most readers will readily understand, he has not ventured to call it a continuation of "Christabel," but simply issues it in this volume under a title of its own—more especially as it differs, in some respects essentially, from what is stated to have been the conception of the Author of "Christabel" regarding the final portion of that poem. This conception (or supposed conception) was unknown to the writer of "The Snake-Witch" until the latter was practically completed.

August, 1898.

SYNOPSIS OF THE POEM.

§ 1. The coming up of the storm.

§ 2. (Retrospective as regards § 1.) Christabel in her chamber. The unseen presence of the Snake-Witch. The spell broken by the mother's voice. The exhortation to seek the Hermit's cell. The midnight ride.

§ 3. The passing of the storm.

§ 4. The Hermit. His past relations with the mother of Christabel.

§ 5. Christabel and the Hermit. De Bracy's return from Tryermaine. His narrative : The lord of Tryermaine ; the dead Geraldine ; the destruction of the castle.

§ 6. The cavalcade in the forest at Langdale. De Bracy's arrival. His words arrested by the Snake-Witch. The Hermit breaks the spell. The Snake-Witch assumes her proper form, and disappears. The Baron's death. Conclusion : *fuit Ilium*.

THE SNAKE-WITCH.

“ In die Traum und Zaubersphaere
Sind wir, scheint es, eingegangen—”

GOETHE: FAUST.

“ The limits of the sphere of dream,
The bounds of true and false are past—”

SHELLEY'S PARAPHRASE.

I.

THE wolves' long wail in the ghastly light
Drifts drearily through the forest-moan,
And darkly up with the coming night
The black and jagged clouds are blown :
In scatter'd legions, wildly strewn,
They sweep across the lurid sky,
Or roll'd along the distance lie
In billowy masses, dense and dun,
Above and below the broad red bar
Where floats and flames a crimson star
Following fast the sunken sun !

Huddled close, with blinking eye,
The owls awake on the castle wall—

From cliff and crag the nightjars call—
Each answers each with hoot and cry,
With cry and hoot they answer, all !
The black-wing'd bats whirl darkly by—
In fever'd gusts the night-winds blow—
Above, the black pines surge and sigh,
The black stream sobs below :
As ever it goes on its gleamless way
Through miles of forest—far and far—
Touch'd by never a tender ray
Of sun or moon or circling star !

But to-night no moon mounts high—
Never a moon, and never a star—
And gone is now the long red bar
That cleft with flame the closing sky.
The twilight faint and fainter grows,
The wolves' weird cry still comes and goes,
And hoarse along the lonely hills
The roar of thunder rolls, and fills
The answering forest ! Fitfully,
In broken gusts the blinding rain
Is dash'd and driven fiercely by :
The wither'd leaves are whirl'd on high :
The muttering storm comes on amain :
Before it, low and black and torn,
In trailing wrack the clouds are borne

Across the black and starless sky.
Black above, and black below,
The pointed pine-tops hardly shew
Against the gathering night behind.
Loud and louder moans the wind
Like fetter'd beast that strives in vain
To rend and gnash its galling chain :
Now in wild rushes—in wailings now—
A wild night cometh apace, I trow !

Under the boughs in the blackness swinging
With tighten'd clutch the bats are clinging :
The scared night-birds have ceas'd their call,
The wolves are silent, one and all :
Every lowly living form
Every forest creature, now,
Under sheltering rock or bough
In hidden lair awaits the storm.
Only the road, on night like this,
Mocking the coilèd adder's hiss,
From fissured earth and fallen tree
Comes forth in fearless jubilee !
It were frightful now to see
The semblance of a human thing,
For one might deem, on night so foul,
A fiend it were, or loathly ghoul,
In that weird forest wandering !

Holy Mother ! what be these
That flash athwart the swaying trees ?
A moment seen, a moment lost,
As shines in sheeted flame anew
The quivering lightning, broad and blue,
And high the clashing boughs are tost !

Like shapes that haunt the world of dream,
Those shadowy forms in the darkness seem—
The black horse runs with loosen'd rein,
The maiden's hair floats loose and free,
One hand caresses the creature's mane,
And one is clasp'd on her rosary.
Brave Gareth, on ! she softly cries,
With swifter rush the horse replies ;
The foam is dash'd on flank and breast,
High floats and falls its matted crest,
Its straining eyeballs glare behind,
As half in terror, and half in wrath,
Adown the long dark forest-path
It rushes on with the rushing wind !

II.

HALF-WAY up the turret stair,
In her maiden chamber fair,
Silent as a nun that sits
In the silence of her cell,
Sits the lady Christabel !
The bat without in the gloaming flits,
And she has sat there all day long
Since the lark's unloosen'd song
Rippled through the reddening morn :
A weary creature, crush'd, forlorn,
As one that in a ghastly dream,
Where real and unreal mingled seem,
Forlorn and helpless doth espy
The dull cold hate of an evil eye,
And cowering shrinks beneath its spell :
So shrinks the lady Christabel.

The stormy sunset's lurid glow,
Across the carved Christ upthrown,
Hangs blood-like on the tortured brow
Engirdled thick with thorny crown,

As wearily she sinks adown
Before the Holy Rood to pray
That he, her agèd sire, alway,
By saints above might guarded be
From power of hellish sorcery :
But ever in her fever'd brain
The struggling thoughts arise in vain ;
Whilst hoarsely from the banquet-hall
Wild bursts of revel rise and fall,
And mock her oft attempted prayer.
As swathèd corpse beneath its pall,
Was she beneath that deadly thrall,
Cowering crush'd and helpless there.

So, from the darkening earth and sky
The long day waned—the night fell drear—
When wildly, with a shivering cry
Of loathing and of ghastly fear,
In terror to her feet she leapt :
A snake's low hiss appall'd her ear,
A snake's cold touch across her crept !
And as she rose there came a sound
Of leaves wind-trail'd on wintry ground,
But nothing could she see, I ween,
Save that which there had always been :
The chevron bands that edg'd the floor
All shapely set in oak and yew,

The couch whose silken curtains bore
The Virgin's colours, white and blue ;
The shadowy arras-folds enwrought
With many a quaintly pictured thought
Of knight and dame of high degree,
And deed of courtly chivalry.
The lamp still swung from its silver chain
Beneath the massive oaken beam
All carved with shapes of life and dream
That once had throng'd the carver's brain.¹
And clear against the trellis'd pane
With living tracery all o'ergrown,
She saw the Holy Rood where she
Since childhood's hour, on bended knee,
At morn and even, every day,
Was wont with folded palms to pray—
These she saw, and these alone.

A viewless horror hung about—
Through the thick air a silence fell,
Save when the wind's moan moan'd without
To the weary moan of Christabel !

¹ "Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain."

Christabel, Part I.

Again she sank upon her knee,
Clasping her hands across her eyes
To hide the sight she fear'd to see—
When soft as dew from summer skies
Came down a soothing influence,
A holy calm, she knew not whence,
That broke the hideous spell's control :
And like a lingering echo, thrown
Through the long gloom of memories gone,
A voice awoke within her soul :
“Thou had'st thine hour—this hour is mine !
By holy cross on breast and brow,
And Mary's loving grace divine,
I break thy hellish trammel now !

“And thou, O daughter Christabel,
Arise, and cast aside thy fear,
And seek in haste the Hermit's cell,
Where scatter'd rocks lie thick between
The mountains grey and the forest green,
And girt with hoar pines, rent and sere,
Through clinging mists the echoing Fell
Looms dark above the lonely mere.”

So Christabel a vow has made,
And ere her limbs to rest are laid
She must seek the Hermit's cell

Beneath the mountains gaunt and bare,
To kneel before Our Lady's shrine
And ask in lowly loving prayer
For grace to break the hateful spell
Of thy charm'd touch, false Geraldine,
That holds within its serpent coil
Fair Langdale's lord, whom Heaven assoil,
Her agèd sire, Sir Leoline !

And thus through all the storm-blown night,
And through the forest wide and drear,
With never a human creature near,
She speeds upon her lonely flight.

III.

THE midnight storm has roll'd afar,
The pale dawn pearls the opening skies,
And one by one each waning star
Within the opal'd orient dies.
Low on the line of sky and lake
The red moon floats with horns a-top,
But only the owls are yet awake
To watch the red moon drop and drop.

IV.

O FALSE dream, darkening Hope's eclipse—

It was their bridal prime, he thought :

Day purpled into night—their lips

Each other in the darkness sought,

And meeting silently were press'd

In one long clasp that clung and drew

Soul into soul ! If false or true,

He heeded not—he only knew

They were all one in that unrest

That held him with its vampire spell,

Till fled the faithless dream away,

And on his heart the dead hope fell

As falls upon a corpse the clay—

And through the night, and through the day,

Ever it came, the voice that said

With ceaseless mock, it better were

O Fool, for thee, that thou wert dead,

Than live to fix thy love on her !

In fitful sleep the Hermit lay

All night within his chamber lone,

Wrought and carv'd in the grey bare stone :

And in his dream there came alway
A white-robed ghost that spake no word,
But whose pale glance his pulses stirr'd,
And made his life-blood quicker flow,
As in the old days, long ago.
He was weary and worn and grey,
But in his dream, a buried hour
Came back with all its throb and power,
When he, whose soul now waxèd dim,
Was proud of heart and strong of limb :
A leader in the rush of arms
In many a long-forgotten day,
When through the land roll'd war's alarms
And clarions rang to battle-fray,
And rose the death-cry fierce and fell !

O sainted mother of Christabel,
Now cold within the silent grave,
Long lov'd, too dearly and too well,
Day and night thy soul to save
He prays within his stony cell.
And all the Past comes back again :
The fleeting joy, the lingering pain,
The vision of a life, long dead,
Ere youth and youth's fond hopes had fled
And left him wreck'd of hope and aim
Through months and years, till life became

The phantom of a memory
That clung and clung, and would not die.

When he return'd to England's shore
From Paynim lands beyond the sea,
And found thee lost for evermore
To him whose heart's deep fealty
Was given to thee, and thee alone—
When life's one treasured hope was gone—
He turn'd him from the struggling world,
And sought in that lone mountain-home,
With sword unclasp'd, and pennon furl'd,
For peace in prayer, if peace might come.

In childhood they had roam'd together
Many a long bright summer day,
Hand in hand through fern and heather
Searching every forest-way—
Till the sundering hour, alas !
Too quickly came—and then he knew
A barrier stood between the two,
A gulf no human hope could pass.

Then years went on—and then again
They met within the old oak-wood :
And often to his solitude
For counsel in her need or pain

The gracious lady with grave eyes
Would come, till they once more became
Friends as of old, whose sympathies
In sever'd paths were still the same.
And soon, though never word was said,
The secret of his soul she read
Across its silence. But she knew
His every thought was brave and true
And proud and true as hers—and she
Let their renew'd communion be
Unfetter'd in its fealty.
But soon he stood again alone—
Ere yet the first spring-buds had blown
Low he knelt at the lady's side,
With head bow'd down in silent prayer
Beside the wan face lying there :
And on her dead cold hand did press
A lingering first and last caress,
By Death's great parting sanctified—
Betwixt the midnight and the morn
The castle bell toll'd out, forlorn,
The hour when Christabel was born,
And she, the gentle mother, died—
Betwixt the Darkness and the Day,
Whilst Life and Death inwoven were,
The Mother of God came softly there
And bore the sinless soul away !

V.

NO cloud the Day's swift dawning blears,
The soft light fills the Hermit's cell,
And there to his rapt sight appears
The form of that dead Christabel
Whom he had lov'd so long and well
Through all the long and lonely years.
But as he gazed, the lingering dream,
That made the Past the Present seem,
Ebb'd slowly from his soul—and so,
He knew it was the child of her
Whose memory made his pulses stir
As in the old days, long ago !
The child of that dead Christabel
Whom he had lov'd so long and well !

She knelt before the Hermit old,
And there her ghastly tale she told,
Praying for his help and aid,
And for help of Our Lady dear ;
And every faltering word she said
Was whisper'd low in watchful fear
Of some dread sight she dared not see—

Her hands were clasp'd across his knee,
Her weary brow above them press'd,
Whilst he with soothing touch caress'd
Her radiant hair, that all unbound,
In clustering tresses, fold on fold,
Around her fell like rippling gold,
And golden'd all the stony ground.

Amidst the silence, suddenly
Arose an eaglet's startled cry :
And quickly following came the sound
Of clattering hoofs ; and far and near
De Bracy's bugle, shrill and clear,
Awoke the echoing rocks around !
Haggard and pale is Bracy's face
As one who of Our Lady's grace
Hath sorest need. His jaded horse,
Foam-fleck'd, and dash'd with crimson stain,
Stands trembling by the yellow gorse
With drooping head and loosen'd rein
Beneath the grey rock's grateful shade.
But, quick dismounting, Bracy made
The holy sign in silent prayer,
Ere yet he sought the Hermit's cell.

Up from her knee rose Christabel,
And toss'd aside her blinding hair,

And cried with cry of fear and pain :
What bring'st thou, then, from Tryermaine,
That thus thou standest silent there ?

He bent him low and answer made :
A gruesome tale have I to tell—
Jesu, Maria ! shield thee well
From Witchcraft's hate and powers of Hell !
God's mercy shield us all, she said.

Then Bracy spake : The Baron's hest
I heard, and must perforce obey :
I took two steeds in rich array,
And took the youth whom I lov'd best
To bear my harp,¹ and so away
Whilst yet the wan moon held the west.
From reddening dawn to ebb of day
We rode upon our joyless way
Beneath the broad oaks, branching wide,
In their green gloom ; and then beside
The lake's grey silence ; and along
The mountain pathways lone and drear,
And never sound of harp or song
Arose our weary way to cheer.
But strange foreboding sadness lay
Upon our hearts the livelong day :

¹ See "Christabel," Part II.

And ever with us, side by side,
Ever unseen, but ever near,
The shadow of a shapeless fear
Rode with us through that lonesome ride—
Till, in the gathering eventide,
Before us roll'd the darkening plain
Where rose the towers of Tryermaine.

Tryermaine's walls stood strong and high,
Black they stood against the sky,
By tower and turret darkly crown'd !
Many a mile along the land
The salt sea-marshes girt them round
With wastes of ooze and drift and sand,
Where sounds the bittern's booming cry,
And sad winds moan, and ceaselessly,
As beat of pulse in living thing,
Comes and goes with its rhythmic swing
The sullen roar of the restless sea.

No banner waves from keep or tower,
No challenge comes from gate or wall :
Still and dark is the lady's bower,
Still and dark the banquet-hall.
Only the chapel windows throw
Across the night a crimson glow ;
And through them weirdly floats and falls

The low wild croon of a ghostly dirge—
Afar, at fitful intervals,
The wandering bittern hoarsely calls,
The night-wind wails along the walls,
And thunders ever the breaking surge !

Loud on the night our bugles rang :
Quick answering back, with iron clang,
The drawbridge drops across the moat,
And whilst the bugle echoes float
In faint and fainter tones afar,
The castle gates swing back : but none,
Warder or henchman, never one,
Comes forth our way to guide or bar.
We cross'd the moat, and tether'd well
Our steeds, that shook with strangest fear,
As though some loathly thing were near ;
Whilst through the night the castle bell
Toll'd and toll'd its ghostly knell,
And the weird death-chant rose and fell
In measur'd cadence, mournfully.
And so with wavering steps did we
Pass onward through the courtyard bare,
Where none to meet or greet us were :
And through the gloom of chambers vast,
So lone, a curse seem'd on them cast,

So ghastly cold and still were they,
Until a faint and trembling ray
Beneath a sculptured doorway shone
And led our wondering footsteps on.
The curtain that across it hung
By hands unseen was drawn aside,
The door upon its hinges swung
And the vast chapel high and wide
In sheen of gold and pillar'd pride
Stood open to our startled gaze !
Around it, countless torches blaze,
And black-cowl'd monks, in long array,
And weeping sisters, kneel and pray.
And ever the death-bell toll'd and toll'd,
And ever it rose, the chanted prayer
For the white wan corpse, so quiet and cold,
In its death-slumber sleeping there.
Behind the bier, the Holy Rood
With its crown'd Christ by the altar stood :
Across the dead its shadow fell,
Across the face so young and fair :
And ever it toll'd, the passing bell,
And ever arose the chanted prayer—
Mary ! benedicite !
A sinless soul has flown to thee :
Hear our prayer, and give it rest
On thy sinless, sainted breast !

Near by, against the altar-stone,
An old man, silent, sat alone :
White-faced and haggard, with white hair,
And eyes whose dazed and piteous stare
Was like a dead man's wondering look :
And all his frame with palsy shook.
But as I gazed, and gazed again,
I knew the lord of Tryermaine
Was he who sat in silence there,
So changed, and wreck'd, and wan with care.

Then, with obeisance duly made,
I stood before his seat, and said :
I am bard Bracy of Langdale,
Sent by my lord, Sir Leoline,
To hasten without let or fail
And say thy daughter Geraldine
Is safe and free in Langdale tower.
He bids thee come in proud array
With all thy men and knightly power
To bear her back to Tryermaine.
And further, doth my lord avow
That he repents the fierce disdain¹
That urged his words in days that now
Have long gone by. For never yet,
Since that far day, can he forget

¹ See "Christabel," Part II.

The friendship lost, the longing vain,
The Past, and all its growth of pain.
This doth the Baron say to thee,
In love and all true loyalty,
Thou gracious lord of Tryermaine !

The old man sat a little space,
Whilst pass'd across his lion face
A quivering spasm of sharp pain.
Then to his feet he rose amain,
And laugh'd a frightful laugh aloud,
And cried : He lies, this lord of thine,
I have no child—my Geraldine,
Behold her there in her death-shroud !
Sir, was it well to come like this
And mock an old man's wretchedness ?
I know not what thy wild words mean :
But in this hideous misery
I have no heart to answer thee—
Away, and say what thou hast seen
To thy false lord ! Low sobs between
His strangled words came thick and fast :
And like the stabbing of a knife
Was his mad stare ! Then all the Past,
The blow that crush'd his stricken life,
Struck back upon his soul anew—

And wearily, with piteous moan,
He sank beside the altar-stone.

There was no more that man could do,
No more that we could urge or say
Where words must bootless be and vain.
So with sad heart we turn'd away
To seek our homeward path again.
But as beside the bier we pass'd
And on the bride-deck'd dead a last
Sad lingering look of pity cast,
The madness of a ghastly sight
Our souls assail'd. O sorrow and sin !
The lilies in her hands and hair
No whiter than her white throat were,
But in that throat's translucent white
Two red spots burn'd, like a serpent's bite
Where deep the fangs have fasten'd in !
And through the strokes of the passing-bell
There came the wail of a far-off cry,
Whispering low, as it wander'd by—
“ A lover's kiss—and a bridal bed :
A serpent's kiss—and the grave, instead.
If lover and serpent but one should be,
Beware the tryst by the linden-tree—
Fool's-heart, farewell ! ”

With hurrying steps and reeling brain
We reached our tether'd steeds again,
And swiftly mounting urged our flight
Across the blackness of the night,
Whilst, all around, the rising sea
Swept o'er the land unceasingly
Before the storm-blast's gathering sway.
The bellowing thunder roll'd away :
And in the lightning's livid sheen
A moment's space the wildering scene
Stood out in strange and spectral hue,
Till dropp'd the night's dark pall anew.
We rode and rode, but as we pass'd
Beyond the flooded land, at last,
And gain'd the sheltering hills—we turn'd,
And Tryermaine's tall towers discern'd
Pale in the lightning's passing gleam :
And all beyond, the broad black sea
Swung dark and desolate ! The scream
Of storm-blown sea-birds, savagely,
Across the darkness drifted by :
And in the lurid quivering flame
(As ever anew the lightning came
In blinding glare o'er sea and sky)
A world of waters foam'd and flash'd
Along the shore—and rearing high,
Roll'd in upon the land, and dash'd

In thunder through the castle walls !
The lights a moment redly shone,
A moment more, and all were gone :
And from the distance, frantic calls
Of agony, and one long wail,
Rose on the night, and died away—
Dear Lady, 'tis a gruesome tale,
But little more remains to say.
We tarried till the break of day,
And when the dawn came, nought was there
But the flood-swept land and the swaying sea,
And the white gulls sailing and circling where
Tryermaine's halls were wont to be !

VI.

THE night is over, the noon has come,
The forest is full of the wild bees' hum,
And faint but clear, and soft withal,
Comes from afar the cuckoo's call.
And bright and gay are Langdale's bowers,
And bright and gay each sunny glade,
And gay the courtly cavalcade
That issues now from Langdale's towers
And through the greenwood takes its way
With hawk and hound in proud array.
Loud and long the bugles blow
As under the boughs the riders go,
Two and two, in joyous guise !

Sir Leoline is old and grey,
But strong his life-tide runs to-day
Beneath the lady's winsome eyes.
Richly and daintily dight is she
As a young queen-bride from beyond the sea :
And the sheen of her garb and floating veil
Glistens and gleams like a serpent's scale.
She sits her palfry, lithe and slim,

And rolls her large bright eyes on him :
And every glance is a veil'd caress .
That laps his soul in longings vain.
There is no madness of love, I guess,
With its fever'd yearning and fool's excess,
Like that which burns in an old man's brain !
The young may love—and love again :
But when the tide of life runs low,
If passion come in the afterglow
The mad wild dream remains away,
Absorbing all life's lingering day,
Till faint the failing heart-throbs grow
And life's last dreaming ebbs away.

Let us rest here, the Baron said,
And let our sylvan feast be spread
Beneath these broad oaks' pleasant shade.
And thou, Lord Ronald's beauteous maid,
Deign to alight, and here await
The coming of thy noble sire.
He bends him low in knightly state,
He kisses her fair hands—the fire
Of years gone by in heart and eyes—
And forth they step in courtly guise.

The Baron's heart is proud and gay,
He sits and drinks the golden wine,

No care hath he. Ah, wellaway !
The glittering eyes of the lady shine
As the eyes of a snake on its charmed prey :
But her red mouth and her lips the while
Hold his soul with their traitress smile.

From kneeling page a lute she takes,
Attunes the strings, and then awakes
A strange wild song. No nightingale
Singing aloft on its summer bough,
Singing and flinging high and low
Its throng of song on the silent vale,
Ever fill'd with its passionate melody
The longing void of the soul, as she
In that wild, wondrous, tender lay
Of the love and the life of a long-lost day
That hath been, but no more may be,
Rhymed of old to his mistress fair
By truant page or gay trouvère
Dreaming under the greenwood tree.
The air around grew hush'd and still
As through it there ran the wild magical thrill
Of her voice with its passion of sob and sigh—
And ever its tremulous cadence died
Like the murmur of leaves on a mountain side,
When stars are afloat in the darkening sky !

From pine to pine the throistles call,
The lengthening shadows eastward fall,
But still they wait, and wait in vain,
The coming of the Tryermaine.
Why tarries he a-field so long,
That should avenge his daughter's wrong ?
Or hath De Bracy turn'd aside
Before the tempest-driven tide ?
Last night, in truth, the storm rode high,
And all the lower lands might be
Engulf'd beneath the wind-swept sea.
Many a wild unearthly cry,
So seem'd it, hoarsely floated by,
And haunted all the shuddering wood
Around these castle-walls of mine :
So spake aloud Sir Leoline—
When suddenly De Bracy stood
Amidst them all ! Death-pale was he,
As sinking low on bended knee
He strove to speak : but never word
From his wan lips the listeners heard.
Spell-bound beneath the lady's glance
Whose swift flame struck athwart his soul,
As one half-dazed in wondering trance
In vain he strove from its control
His baffled will again to free.
Then laugh'd the lady mockingly,

And her wild laugh struck drear and chill
With sense of swift-impending ill :
And all drew back appall'd, I wis,
As slow the mad laugh seem'd to change
Into a whispering weird and strange
As sounds a serpent's shivering hiss !
And her curv'd lips grew pale with fear,
As through the clustering ferns drew near
The Hermit old and Christabel !
The cross the Hermit bore was made
Of the true Christ-tree, and inlaid
With relics of the saintly dead
Who for the Christian faith had bled.
And this he rais'd aloft, and cried
By the great love of Him, who died
For man's redemption, thy foul spell
I break : and by the Holy Name
Thou dar'st not utter, bid thee hence—
Back to thy native hell from whence
Thou cam'st to work thy woe and shame !
He touch'd her with the cross, and she
Shrank back and shriek'd in agony,
And fell upon the forest ground
With a ghastly shuddering sound !

A pale flame, quivering, leaps and burns
Its way across the crozier'd ferns,

And swift along its fiery trail
A lithe green snake, that none may stay,
Glides and gleams with glittering scale
Beneath the tangled roots away—
And from that fateful hour, no more,
In summer-glades of waving green,
Or in the wintry forest hoar,
Was that envenom'd spirit seen :
Never more in hall or bower,
With its hell-born hate and power !

Then Bracy, freed from that fell thrall,
With rapid utterance told how all
The pride and power of Tryermaine,
Never more to rise again,
Lay low beneath the surging sea—
And all the fearful sights that he
Had seen in its death-haunted halls !

Around him all in horror close,
When, hoarse with fear, one loudly calls,
Look to our lord ! The Baron rose,
As men from hideous dreams arise,
And staggering blindly, with dazed eyes,
And outstretch'd arms, sought vainly round,
Then fell, stone-dead, along the ground !

With one wild cry came Christabel,
And strove to clasp him ere he fell,
And knelt, and rais'd upon her breast
His pale cold cheek. The Hermit, too,
Knelt by him whilst the cross he press'd
To the dead lips whose livid hue
Too plainly told that all was o'er,
And Langdale's lord would rise no more !

CONCLUSION TO THE SNAKE-WITCH.

GHOSTS of dead days and memories dim
Haunt the wreck'd towers that gaunt and grim
Beat vainly back 'Time's ruthless tide,
And stand as erst of old they stood,
When round them all the forest wide
Waved dark and lonely, many a rood.
But, now, the walls are weak and grey,
And crumbling ever in slow decay :
The trailing roots of the maiden-hair
Have thrust the stones apart, and there
The red-lipp'd lichens cling alway :
But still, as in the olden day,
When Spring awakes, and lawn and lea
Are bright again with petall'd gold,
The swallows come across the sea
As came they in the days of old.
Its love-song still, on budding thorn,
The brown-fleck'd throstle pipes anew,
When throbs the Earth's awaken'd morn,
And leaves are green, and skies are blue.
But long has Langdale's glory flown—

With roofless halls, untenanted
Save by the ghosts of days long dead,
The old grey ruin stands alone,
A thing forlorn ! The forest hoar,
And all the old times' wonder-lore,
One and all are dead and gone,
Dead and lost for evermore !

The world goes ever on and on :
What boots it, Friend, to thee or me ?
It still will go when we are gone,
And go no jot less merrily.
The wild mad longing, lost or won,
The fond heart's hidden praise or blame,
What recks it as the world goes on,
And thou an unremember'd name ?
The faces all have shadows grown,
The voices faint as evening's sigh,
The world, a world of ghosts alone,
But still the motley rush goes by :
Ever new, and ever old,
With the wherefore still untold.

A CANADIAN SUMMER-NIGHT



THIS little poem was published a good many years ago, and it has been reprinted in several Canadian collections of native verse. But in its present issue most of the verses have been recast, and some are entirely new. If it possess no special poetic merit, its perusal will at least serve to show that Canada is not, as too frequently depicted, a land altogether of snow and ice.

A CANADIAN SUMMER-NIGHT.

“ My thoughts, like swallows, skim the main,
And bear my spirit back again—
Over the earth, and through the air,
A wild bird and a wanderer ! ”

I.

DEEP on the silent waters lie
The purple shadows dreamingly,
And darken with the darkening sky.

The nightjars wake their vesper note
As through the brooding calm we float,
Thou and I, my winsome boat.

Within the red West's afterglow
The yellow moon hung dim and low,
And slowly sank, an hour ago.

But in those far depths, moon-forsaken,
A planet pale its place hath taken,
And all the myriad stars awaken.

II.

WITH noiseless paddle-dip we glide
Along the bay's dark-fringed side,
Then out—amidst the waters wide.

Tossing aloft their foam-crests white,
Wild waves were racing here, last night,
But these have now lost all their might.

We knew they would not injure us,
Those white waves, wild and boisterous—
And where is now their fret and fuss ?

Only a ripple wrinkles now
The summer lake, and plashes low
Against the boat in soothing flow.

III.

STILL calls and calls the Whip-poor-Will,
From darkening shore and shadowy hill
Its cry forlorn comes faintly still :

But surging through that plaintive cry
A wilder sound is wafted by,
Out of the dark woods, drearily.

It dies, and then the night's low moan—
Soft as a voice from worlds unknown,
In dim dreams heard—is heard alone.

Till comes the owl's weird cry anew,
Piercing the dark pine-forest through,
With its long too-hoo ! too-hoo !

IV.

THE gathering night-winds stronger grow,
The rippling waters run below,
And fast and faster on we go.

But with us now, and side by side,
A dusky silent form doth glide
Across the waters dark and wide.

Though swift and light the bark canoe,
The pride of place still rests with you,
My dainty boat, so trim and true.

“Indian ! whither speeds thy flight ?”

“Homewards I wend : yon distant light
Shines out for me : good-night !” “Good-night !”

V.

SHOREWARDS again we turn, and go
Where the sumach shadows flow
Across the purple calm below.

There, hidden voices, all night long,
The sedgy pools and creeks among,
Keep up unseen their summer song.

A song as soft and musical
As murmuring sound of distant fall,
Or winds that through the tree-tops call.

And where the lonely swamp lies dreaming,
Shines the fire-flies' fitful gleaming,
Through the cedars dancing, streaming !

VI.

WHO hides in yonder dusky tree
Where bats alone awake should be,
And with his whistling mocketh me ?

Such quaint quick pipings—two and two—
Half a whistle, half a coo—
Ah, Master Tree-frog ! gare-à-vous !

The owls on noiseless wing gloom by,
Beware lest one a glimpse espy
Of your green coat and jewell'd eye—

And so, good luck ! We glide anew
Where shows the lake its softest blue
With mirror'd star-points sparkling through.

VII.

THE lights upon the distant shore,
That shone so redly, shine no more :
The Indian-fisher's toil is o'er.

And deepening in the eastern skies,
Where up and up new stars arise,
A pearly lustre softly lies.

Thy witchery waneth—so, farewell,
Thou summer night ! thy tender spell
Deep in my dreams long time will dwell—

And paint in many a distant scene,
The lake—the shore—the forest green—
The summer nights that once have been.

THE FIR-TREE

REPRODUCED, IN REVISED FORM, FROM SOME
EARLIER POEMS BY THE AUTHOR





THE FIR-TREE.

“Warte nur, balde,
Ruhest du auch.”

CLOSE to my chamber-window
A little fir-tree stands :
And when in the twilight I sit there,
And summer winds blow softly,
The boughs of the little fir-tree
Bend them, and touch my hands.

Once, two sat beside it,
As the stars through its branches shone :
Sat there, through the soft gloaming,
Weaving anew the old gladness ;
But now, if I sit in its shadow,
I sit there, in silence, alone.

Twice since then have I seen her—
Once in her bridal pride :
With a thing, God's-truth, you might strangle
With one hand in less than a minute—
But the owner of acres and acres,
Her husband, stuck at her side !

The pill needed gilding, truly,
And gold there was there enough—
Jewels and horses and mansions,
And servants, lying and fawning,
And elegant creatures about her,
Lisping their damnable stuff.

So, a few years went over,
And then—and what marvel, it came !
But the liar and coward who fool'd her,
He left her at last in her ruin :
Left her, helpless and dying,
Alone with her terrible shame.

But a bloodhound was loosen'd upon him—
After him—night and day :
Till we stood in the grey winter-morning
Foot to foot, blade to blade, the word waiting,
And I thrust him to earth, and he lay there,
For all his boasted play.

And then to her couch—and she knew me,
Once and again, ere she died :
And whisper'd, with white lips, “ O dear one,
When death blots the shame and the madness,
Take me back, take me home to the fir-tree,
And lay me there by its side.”

So I carried her home, and I laid her
Under yon lowly mound,
Between the roots of the fir-tree:
If the ground by no rites had been hallow'd,
It hurts not the calm of her sleeping,
To us it was holy ground.

And now, as I sit at my window,
When the day's dull hours are told,
I dream, as the fir-boughs bend them,
A soft touch sendeth its greeting,
And hear, in the whispering branches,
The voice so dear of old !



AMPHIOXUS AND ASCIDIAN



THIS piece of jocose rhyming is paraphrased, or rather imitated, from the German of M. REYMOND (*Das neue Laienbrevier des Haeckelismus: Gesang 13*). As the original is without any distinct title I have ventured to add one, together with some marginal and other annotations.—E. J. C.

AMPHIOXUS AND ASCIDIAN: OUR GELATINOUS ANCESTORS.

HOW THE MISSING LINKS WERE DISCOVERED
AND MADE KNOWN.

I.

A SLIMY lancetlet once lay
Half-hidden in the golden sand
Of Naples' blue and balmy bay—
And thought—how pleasant, here, to-day
Is this warm sunny strand.

A lancelet (*Amphioxus lanceolatus*) finds it pleasant on Posilippo's shore.

But on the horizon's shadowy brim
A horrid vision doth arise—
A spectacled Professor grim!
All things that creep, crawl, fly, or swim,
Must he anatomize!

Horrid advent of an anatomist.

A "find" his eager senses sniff—
He stoops—he sees: with joy elate
He grasps the creature in a jiff—
And cries—now, I'll be jiggered—if
It isn't vertebrate!

The lancelet captured and pronounced a vertebrate.

The lancelet's
objections to
his view.

The victim groaned—"Come, that's *too* pale—
Don't try on me that precious cram—
Limpid and soft from top to tail,
I'm nothing but a naked snail—
Ask Pallas¹ what I am !"

The Professor's
answer.

The dreadful Herr made answer, "Nay !
I mean, my dear, myself to 'fix' it :
No wise man trusts what others say,
Or heeds, in this far-searching day,
The dead Past's *ipse dixit* !"

A deed of
horror.

So saying, without more ado,
(To tender feeling sadly callous)
He slit poor Slimy through and through,
And bottled—as he'd bottle you—
This pseudo-snail of Pallas !

¹ A celebrated Russo-German naturalist of the last century, who first described the lancelet, in 1778, but regarded it as a kind of slug. Its vertebrate nature, based on the presence of a chorda dorsalis, was suggested in 1834; and its relations to the larval condition of certain tunicates or ascidians were shown by Kowalewsky in 1866. It is now commonly looked upon as the lowest type of the Fish series.

And thus, although the little nata-
Torial beast has no backbone,
For reasons based on larval data
It came among the Vertebrata
A place, at last, to own !

II.

PASS thirty years and two—ah me!

Another
Professor!

How quick time gallops!—Then there came
A learned Russ to that blue sea—
To fish for tunicates came he,
Also to fish for fame!

And so before his zeal should flag,
Or fall below its high meridian¹—
To work he went with dredge and drag,
And fished up quite a thumping bag
Of things ascidian!

A good "bag."

And then came out the startling truth—
Let all the world's four corners hear it!
The ascidian in its frisky youth
Is half a vertebrate, in sooth,
Or something somewhere near it!

The great news.

¹ "I have touched the highest point—
And from that full meridian of my glory
I haste now to my setting."

SHAKESPEARE (or FLETCHER): *Henry VIII.*

Hæckel on the
move.

Swift sped the news o'er land and sea,
Till reaching Hæckel's ears—that great
Stem-framer—in vacation free—
Pack'd up, and went post-haste to see
This yea-nay vertebrate !

The missing
links.

And there, our great Ontogenist—
Whose word bewitches whilst it shocks us—
Beheld the links his System miss'd,
Patent to all—or he'd be hiss'd—
Ascidian—Amphioxus !

The Stem-
Theory
completed.

All things are sure to one who waits :
And here the links at last were seen
Made manifest to meanest pates—
Invertebrated Vertebrates—
Fishes and worms between !

The final link.

Thus, hæckelism's wondrous gleam
Makes clear, to all, how all arose—
Forward and forward went the stream
Of shifting forms, like shapes of dream,
And found in us its close !

ADDITIONAL VERSES

OLD AND NEW



ADDITIONAL VERSES.

THE SONG AND ITS SINGER.

SHE sang a little German song :

Du bist wie eine Blume—

My heart responded, all along,

Du bist, ja, eine Blume !

The turf lies on her, now ! No more,

Our hearts exchange kind greeting,

But mine keeps often, o'er and o'er,

Those old fond words repeating :

Du bist wie eine Blume !

Du bist wie eine Blume !

A MEMORY.

DOST thou remember how I gave to thee
A little flower on that far-off shore
Where the wild Danube dashes evermore
Through its cleft chasm to the distant sea ?
And how, as we return'd at eventide
Through the cool woods with our companions gay,
I miss'd the flower—and said, O Cruel, say,
That which I gave thee, hast thou cast aside ?
And how with low quick whisper you replied,
Non, je l'ai gardé ! All the golden sky,
The rustling pine-boughs and the reeling ground
And all my heart within me, then went round
In one wild dance and thrill of ecstasy !
Through its cleft rocks the river rushes on—
The pine-woods darken in the twilight, still—
But where art thou—and where the wondrous thrill
That stirr'd my heart in those old days ago ?

ON THE ATLANTIC.

I. THE TWILIGHT.

THE storm-clouds each other are chasing—

A grey sea fast darkens below :

The billows are rolling and racing,

Their white crests gleam as they go.

Up and down in the deep green hollows

The ship is toss'd on its way,

And the swift sea hungers and follows,

As a shark follows fast on its prey.

II. THE DAWNING.

The dawn and the darkness are meeting,

A weird light illumines the wild sea—

The night and its wan stars are fleeting—

The white moon hangs low on the lee.

And on, through the wild rush careering,

High breasting the waves as they run,

The good ship its haven is nearing,

The storm-fight is over—and won !

A DREAM'S ENDING.

" Un peu de rêve,
Et puis—bonjour ! "

I.

THE boat is loosen'd from the land :
With harsh clang sounds the signal-bell—
And so, we take each other's hand,
And say our cold farewell !

O month of tender memories,
Liv'st thou in *one* heart, or in *two* ?
I look into her cruel eyes,
And murmur " would I knew ! "

II.

“ Was willst du, thörichter Reiter,
Mit deinem thörichten Traum ? ”

THE river-pool lies calm and clear,
Deep down, its tangled weeds I see :
If thou lay there, and she were here,
Dost think that she would weep for thee
The weeping of a single tear ?

No gleam of tears the proud eyes know—
The proud lips meet with icy press,
Keeping the whisper'd words so low
The dead alone may hear their hiss—
Thou hadst thy warning : be it so !

LAKE-SCENES IN WESTERN CANADA.

PICTURES FROM AN UNPUBLISHED POEM.

I. AN EVENING SCENE IN SUMMER.

THE night has come with all its thousand stars
And its deep calm that soothes the weary jars
Wrought in the restless day-world. The broad moon
Floats through the wild rice on the lake, and soon,
High mounting, mirrors in the outspread blue
Its orbèd beauty. And then comes, anew,
A little stirring of the low soft wind
That lingers on its way, and leaves behind
The fragrance of the pink-lipp'd locust flowers,
Hanging in thousands in their island-bowers
Away in the blue lake : and on the shore
Where the red-wooded juniper leans o'er
The glimmering waters, and the tall dark pines
Shut out the moon, in curved and gleaming lines
The fire-flies pass and pass ; whilst through the trees
Old forest-hymns and summer melodies,
Fill'd with a mystic poesy, creep on,
Low-breathed from leaf to leaf, in unison
With the soft plash of waters, heard beyond—

II. "DROWNED LAND" BY THE LAKE SHORE: AN
AUTUMNAL TWILIGHT-SCENE.

THE dead trees stand around—gaunt, bleach'd, and
bare—

Like skeletons of strange weird things that were—
The black ooze trailing at their tangled roots :
Far-off, a solitary owlet hoots,
And, all beyond, the great grey waters lie
Pale in the gleam of stars. The night's faint sigh
Floats o'er the pine-plumed islets, looking now
Like phantom ships that come with silent prow
And shadowy sails from some forgotten shore
Lost in the haze of years that come no more,
Save in the semblance of a memory
Re-born in summer dreams—



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